

The current General category baseline quota is 435.1 mt, with 23.1 mt allocated for the January time period. On November 30, 2011, NMFS published a final rule to address adjustments to the General and Harpoon category regulations. Among other actions, this final rule allowed the General category BFT season to remain open until the "January subquota" amount is reached or March 31 (whichever happens first).

Based on the best available BFT landings information for the General category BFT fishery (i.e., 20.4 mt of the available 23.1 mt landed as of February 12, 2013), NMFS has determined that the General category January subquota will be reached by February 15, 2013. Therefore, through May 31, 2013, retaining, possessing, or landing large medium or giant BFT by persons aboard vessels permitted in the Atlantic tunas General and HMS Charter/Headboat categories (while fishing commercially) must cease at 11:30 p.m. local time on February 15, 2013. The General category will reopen automatically on June 1, 2013, for the June through August subperiod. This action is taken consistent with the regulations at §§ 635.27(a)(1)(iii) and 635.28(a)(1). The intent of this closure is to prevent overharvest of the General category January BFT subquota.

Fishermen may catch and release (or tag and release) BFT of all sizes, subject to the requirements of the catch-and-release and the tag-and-release programs at § 635.26. Fishermen are also reminded that all BFT that are released must be handled in a manner that will maximize survivability, and without removing the fish from the water, consistent with requirements at § 635.21(a)(1). For additional information on safe handling, see the "Careful Catch and Release" brochure available at [www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/).

If needed, subsequent General category adjustments will be published in the **Federal Register**. In addition, fishermen may call the Atlantic Tunas Information Line at (888) 872-8862 or (978) 281-9260, or access [www.hmspermits.noaa.gov](http://www.hmspermits.noaa.gov), for updates.

#### Classification

The Assistant Administrator for NMFS (AA) finds that it is impracticable and contrary to the public interest to provide prior notice of, and an opportunity for public comment on, this action for the following reasons:

The regulations implementing the Consolidated HMS FMP provide for inseason retention limit adjustments and fishery closures to respond to the

unpredictable nature of BFT availability on the fishing grounds, the migratory nature of this species, and the regional variations in the BFT fishery. The closure of the General category January BFT fishery is necessary to prevent overharvest of the General category January BFT subquota. NMFS provides notification of closures by publishing the notice in the **Federal Register**, emailing individuals who have subscribed to the Atlantic HMS News electronic newsletter, and updating the information posted on the Atlantic Tunas Information Line and on [www.hmspermits.noaa.gov](http://www.hmspermits.noaa.gov).

These fisheries are currently underway and delaying this action would be contrary to the public interest as it could result in excessive BFT landings that may result in future potential quota reductions for the General category. NMFS must close the General category January BFT fishery before landings of large medium and giant BFT exceed the available subquota. Therefore, the AA finds good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) to waive prior notice and the opportunity for public comment. For all of the above reasons, there is good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553(d) to waive the 30-day delay in effectiveness.

This action is being taken under §§ 635.27(a)(1)(iii) and 635.28(a)(1), and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.* and 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: February 14, 2013.

**Emily H. Menashes,**

*Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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#### DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

##### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

##### 50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 111207737-2141-02]

RIN 0648-XC505

##### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pollock in Statistical Area 630 in the Gulf of Alaska

**AGENCY:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

**ACTION:** Temporary rule; closure.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for pollock in Statistical Area

630 in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the A season allowance of the 2013 total allowable catch of pollock for Statistical Area 630 in the GOA.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), February 14, 2013, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., March 10, 2013.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Josh Keaton, 907-586-7228.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the GOA exclusive economic zone according to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (FMP) prepared by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council under authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Regulations governing fishing by U.S. vessels in accordance with the FMP appear at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

The A season allowance of the 2013 total allowable catch (TAC) of pollock in Statistical Area 630 of the GOA is 5,998 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2012 and 2013 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (77 FR 15194, March 14, 2012) and inseason adjustment (78 FR 267, January 3, 2013).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Regional Administrator has determined that the A season allowance of the 2013 TAC of pollock in Statistical Area 630 of the GOA will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 5,698 mt and is setting aside the remaining 300 mt as bycatch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries. In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), the Regional Administrator finds that this directed fishing allowance has been reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for pollock in Statistical Area 630 of the GOA.

After the effective date of this closure the maximum retainable amounts at § 679.20(e) and (f) apply at any time during a trip.

#### Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. The Acting Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), finds good cause to waive the requirement to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth at 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) and § 679.25(c)(1)(ii) as such requirement is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. This requirement is impracticable and contrary to the public interest as it

would prevent NMFS from responding to the most recent fisheries data in a timely fashion and would delay the closure of directed fishing for pollock in Statistical Area 630 of the GOA. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of February 12, 2013.

The AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effective date of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3). This finding is based upon the reasons provided above for waiver of prior notice and opportunity for public comment.

This action is required by § 679.20 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: February 13, 2013.

**Kara Meckley,**

*Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 111207737-2141-02]

RIN 0648-XC502

#### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Catcher Vessels Using Trawl Gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska

**AGENCY:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

**ACTION:** Temporary rule; closure.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by catcher vessels (CVs) using trawl gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska

(GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the A season allowance of the 2013 Pacific cod total allowable catch apportioned to CVs using trawl gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), February 14, 2013, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., September 1, 2013.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Obren Davis, 907-586-7228.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the GOA exclusive economic zone according to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (FMP) prepared by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council under authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Regulations governing fishing by U.S. vessels in accordance with the FMP appear at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679. Regulations governing sideboard protections for GOA groundfish fisheries appear at subpart B of 50 CFR part 680.

The A season allowance of the 2013 Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC) apportioned to CVs using trawl gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA is 5,728 metric tons (mt), as established by the final 2012 and 2013 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (77 FR 15194, March 14, 2012) and inseason adjustment to the final 2013 harvest specifications for Pacific cod (78 FR 267, January 3, 2013).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator) has determined that the A season allowance of the 2013 Pacific cod TAC apportioned to CVs using trawl gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 5,428 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 300 mt as bycatch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries. In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), the

Regional Administrator finds that this directed fishing allowance has been reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by CVs using trawl gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA. After the effective date of this closure the maximum retainable amounts at § 679.20(e) and (f) apply at any time during a trip.

#### Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), finds good cause to waive the requirement to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth at 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(3) as such requirement is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. This requirement is impracticable and contrary to the public interest as it would prevent NMFS from responding to the most recent fisheries data in a timely fashion and would delay the directed fishing closure of Pacific cod for CVs using trawl gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of February 12, 2013.

The AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effective date of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3). This finding is based upon the reasons provided above for waiver of prior notice and opportunity for public comment.

This action is required by § 679.20 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: February 13, 2013.

**Kara Meckley,**

*Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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